

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
April 25, 2021

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ.

**HE IS RISEN!! HE IS RISEN INDEED!! ALLELUIA!!**

We are planning to begin OUTSIDE in-person worship on the parking lot on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10:30 a.m. (weather permitting). Masks and social distancing will be required. Bring your lawn chair. When you arrive, you will be directed to park your car in a designated space. After you park your car, place your lawn chair where you would like to sit. Then, go to the table to pick up a bulletin, a communion kit (choice of grape juice or wine) and place your offering in the plate.

We are excited about gathering in-person again and we ask you to be considerate of other's needs at this time. This transition back to being together may cause a great deal of anxiety for some people. So, although you may be fully vaccinated and/or may be comfortable being a little more lax with the CDC guidelines; there will be those there on Sunday morning that are not. So, please for the sake of others who are working through their anxiety adhere to CDC guidelines of wearing your mask properly (with your nose covered), maintain the 6 ft separation from others who are not family members, and do not engage in any physical contact (hand-shaking or hugs). We want this outside sanctuary to be a place where all people who choose to attend feel they can participate safely.

The witness committee will be selling pinwheels to benefit Family Promise in May. This is a partnership with Thrivent Financial. We have purchased the pinwheels with a grant from Thrivent and will be selling them for \$2.00. All the proceeds will be donated to the ministry of Family Promise, which provides housing for those who are homeless.

**Garden and Grounds Clean-up** - Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup> 8:30 – 12:00. Join in to help us “spruce” up our grounds for our first outdoor worship service. It will be a great opportunity to reconnect with one another, while at the same

time beautifying our grounds.

**Insurance Renewal** - Help Needed – our insurance policy needs to be updated and we are looking for someone/s with some knowledge and/or experience to help the Council review proposals and make a recommendation for a new policy. Contact Pastor Denise or Lynn Shollenberger, if you would be willing to help.

**Eugene Burkhart Scholarship** – The Eugene Burkhart Scholarship Fund has been set up to provide financial assistance to members of Good Shepherd ELC who are graduating from high school and pursuing higher education. To request an application, email or text Pastor Denise. Completed applications are to be returned to Pastor Denise on or before May 14<sup>th</sup>.

If you have prayer requests, please send them to me so that I can include them in my weekly newsletters.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Denise

Home Phone           610-750-6432

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## Acts 8:26-40

A reading from the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts beginning at the 26<sup>th</sup> verse.

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.)

27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury.

He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it."

30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.

32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"

35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"

37 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and

the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

## Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father  
and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN.

Grace and Peace to you from God  
our Father and Jesus Christ our  
Lord and Savior. AMEN

Being at the right time and at  
the right place with the right  
people – from the world’s  
perspective is called a co-  
incidence. So as we listen to this  
morning’s text from the Acts of  
the Apostles, we might want to  
say that it was just a co-  
incidence that Philip, the  
evangelist, who was also known  
for his preaching and teaching  
was walking on the road from  
Jerusalem to Gaza when he  
encountered the man from  
Africa, who just happened to be  
reading about the Suffering  
servant from the book of Isaiah  
and he needed some help to  
understand what he was reading

Or, we can see this story not as a  
co-incidence but as a God-

incidence where we recognize  
and acknowledge that it is the  
work of the Holy Spirit that has  
brought Philip, the well known  
preacher and teacher, and the  
Ethiopian eunuch that was  
searching for answers to the  
Scriptures that he was reading  
together to accomplish the will of  
the Father.

And that as a result of this  
encounter, the good news of the  
life, death and resurrection of  
the suffering servant Jesus  
Christ will soon be shared with  
people from a foreign country.

In this morning’s text from the  
book of Acts, we hear the gospel  
writer Luke tell the story of  
Philip’s spirit led journey to meet  
up with the eunuch from  
Ethiopian.

And it is important as we hear  
this story to focus on some of the

fascinating details that reveal just how awesome this story really is.

And how this story gives us a glimpse of how the Holy Spirit works in and through us in ways that may seem unusual, uncomfortable or even unthinkable, but in the end it all comes together to do the will of the Father.

So here we have the evangelist Philip, who was one of the seven deacons who was originally chosen to take care of feeding and supporting the widows in Jerusalem. But who, after the stoning of Stephen, left Jerusalem to go and preach and teach in Samaria.

Which is where he was, when God chose him for a new mission. As an angel of the Lord told him to head south on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza.

And it seems from the sketchy details that we have, that Philip without hesitation packs his belongings and heads south

And as he traveled on this road from Jerusalem to Gaza he encounters an Ethiopian eunuch who had come to Jerusalem to worship and was now heading back home Africa.

Now, that seems a little odd that one who had had his body mutilated so that he could work and serve the queen, and one who was obviously not of Hebrew lineage had made the trip all the way from Africa to Jerusalem to worship.

Given that, because of his lineage and his physical mutilation, he would not have been allowed in the temple. But he came anyway and was now heading home.

And as Philip gets within earshot of the Ethiopian, he hears the eunuch reading from the book of Isaiah. Philip approaches this foreigner and asks him if he understands what he is reading. The foreigner says no and asks if Philip would be able to guide him. Philip agrees to help him and accepts the

man's offer to sit and travel with him

And Philip begins to share with him the good news about Jesus the Christ.

As they come to some water, this African man who had not been able to worship in the Temple in Jerusalem asks Phillip if he would baptize him as he says, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"

What is to prevent me from being baptized? Would his mutilated body prevent him from being named and claimed as one of God's children marked with the cross of Christ forever?

Would his African descent keep him from being named and claimed as one of God's children marked with the cross of Christ forever?

No, Jesus, on the cross has broken down all of those walls that had excluded the foreigner. And so, Phillip baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch.

And now named and claimed as a child of God, the Ethiopian eunuch rejoices as he heads back to Africa to spread the good news of what God has done for us through his only beloved Son, who gave his life for us.

Co-incidence – that Philip, the teacher and preacher from Samaria met up with this Ethiopian eunuch who was open and searching to get to know God, No way!

Co-incidence – that the man rejected by the temple religious elite, would not only be accepted but welcomed into the new community of faith that was emerging. No way!

Co-incidence that along their journey through the hill country they would come upon water. No way!

This is not a story of co-incidences. But, this is a story of God-incidences, as God's Holy Spirit worked to connect Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch so that the good news of what God had done for us through the life,

death, and resurrection of his beloved Son Jesus could be made known.

God-incidences not co-incidences, that is the Holy Spirit doing her thing in, through and among God's people.

And I have found in my life, that most of the God-incidences that I have experienced are only visible as I look back and reflect on what has happened. Only then can I see how God has carefully placed me where he needed me.

Only when I look back, can I see how God has brought people into my life to heal me or restore me or to teach me or to challenge me.

Only when I look back can I see how God has used circumstances in my life to send me in a new direction, and how God has used the words and actions of others to give me the confidence and courage to carry on.

So, as we can see in this story of Philip's journey from Jerusalem to Gaza; there were no co-incidences, but there were many God-incidences. As God's Holy Spirit empowered Philip, inspired Philip and guided Philip so that at the right time, with the right person, and in the right place, the will of the Father may be done.

AMEN

## *I Love to Tell the Story*

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- 1 I love to tell the story  
Of unseen things above,  
Of Jesus and His glory,  
Of Jesus and His love.  
I love to tell the story,  
Because I know 'tis true;  
It satisfies my longings  
As nothing else can do.
- I love to tell the story,  
'Twill be my theme in glory  
To tell the old, old story  
of Jesus and His love.
- 2 I love to tell the story;  
More wonderful it seems  
Than all the golden fancies  
Of all my golden dreams,  
I love to tell the story,  
It did so much for me;  
And that is just the reason  
I tell it now to thee.
- 3 I love to tell the story;  
'Tis pleasant to repeat  
What seems each time I tell  
it,  
More wonderfully sweet.  
I love to tell the story;  
For some have never heard  
The message of salvation  
From God's own holy Word.
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- 4 I love to tell the story;  
For those who know it best  
Seem hungering and  
thirsting  
To hear it like the rest.  
And when, in scenes of glory,  
I sing the new, new song,  
'Twill be the old, old story,  
That I have loved so long.
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***Blessing***

May

The love of God,

The light of Christ,

And the joy of the Holy Spirit

Abide with you on this day

and forever more.

**AMEN**